

Coherence in ongoing varieties. The effect of mesosocial and small-scale variables on the use of the intermediate (standard/vernacular) variety in southern Spain.

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This paper addresses some questions regarding coherence within ongoing urban varieties, such as the one boosted by urban middle-class speakers from southern Spain since the fifties of the 20th century (Villena and Vida 2017, 2018). The main issues we focus on here are (1) whether covariation and coherence actually exist within a variety which has primarily emerged on the basis of correction and levelling of vernacular features, and (2) to what extent it is feasible to build a multivariate model able to depict interaction between the macrosocial, mesosocial and small-scales variables underlying the speaker's use of the new variety.

Two relevant factors seem then to be decisive:

(1) On the one hand, the existence of a social and ideological change capable of producing blending of different and even contradictory linguistic features. The role of a proactive speaker willing to use the new variety is then essential. The effect of mesosocial and small-scale variables on the use of the new variety reveals itself as decisive to understand why more than a half of the speakers of a speech community change their mind and decide to set up a process of change.

(2) On the other hand, the speakers' awareness of being part of a new variety. However, although coherent varieties are composed of many single variables which covary – and this is one of the most important recent findings of sociolinguistics (Guy and Hinskens 2016) –, it seems that speakers identify these variables with a particular, most prominent, feature which defines itself as the nucleus of the variety around which all the other variables turn. This is the case with the southern demerging of dental fricative /θ/ (Molina-García 2018).

This presentation deals with coherence within an emerging intermediate (standard / vernacular) interregional variety shaped as a consequence of a new identity involving both traditional regional – as well as local – and modern – as well as national – identities. The social meanings involving this mixed identity are conveyed through combination of vernacular and standard speech features. On the one hand, maintenance of the original southern accent, which involves syllable-final consonant weakening and deletion. On the other hand, shift to the standard-like pronunciation of onset consonants, as well as other grammar and lexical standard features.

The analysis of a certain number of features characterising the Andalusia vernacular varieties has revealed that most of them have undergone levelling and been replaced by standard-like variants among urban middle-class speakers. Distribution of these variants points to the emergence of a new variety which symbolises proactive integration into modern life and the national well-being

society. A multivariate SEM model (path analysis) shows that mesosocial and small-scale variables reflecting the speaker's linguistic attitudes and orientation towards the standard act as mediators between macrosocial entities and the individual speaker's speech behaviour (Villena-Ponsoda 2018).

References

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